

# THE PEACE VOICE

Newsletter for the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College



## Selkirk Launches New Advanced Certificate



### Dr Myler Wilkinson talks about the new course in Transformative Justice

**Peace Voice:** Tell us a little about the new course

**Myler:** The course in Transformative Justice is part of the evolution of the Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College. Our Peace Centre is based in values of the community—empathy, respect, inclusivity, honesty, responsibility. The Centre has become a space of security for those human values, and that honesty. We began to realize that if ever we were seriously to stand for the values associated with Peace—whether in the community or in the world—we would need to understand more fully that justice and peace are brother and sister. One depends on the other, grows from the other.

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Selkirk College and the Mir Centre for Peace will begin a new peace studies program for fall 2012. The Advanced Certificate in Transformative Justice is a part-time program specifically geared towards working professionals or continuing students – those who want to augment their existing expertise and experience with a focus on peace and social justice. Students will be required to have a completed diploma or degree as a prerequisite.

“A major component of the program will be developing and implementing a project” says Mir Centre Chair, Randy Janzen. “Students will be mentored to look at practical ways to introduce or build upon peace and justice in their work place, organization, or community. We anticipate attracting students from a wide variety of backgrounds: business, education, the environment – anyone who is hoping to gain the skills to build cultures of peace in whatever they are doing.”

Most of the program can be completed by distance. Upon completing the introductory course (see adjoining article) students will be guided through a directed studies course, where they will be assisted in exploring how peace and justice apply to their area of expertise or interest. The outcome of this course is that the student will develop a project proposal. The student will then implement the project, with the mentorship of both a Peace Studies instructor and community member who has experience in the chosen field. The course ends with a practical workshop in communication and mediation skills.

For more information on the program, please contact Randy Janzen [rjanzen@selkirk.ca](mailto:rjanzen@selkirk.ca) 250.365.1234 or visit [www.selkirk.ca/mir](http://www.selkirk.ca/mir)

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(Dr Myler Wilkinson cont'd from page one)

Peace 203 will try to get at this connection between peace and justice—a dynamic state of relationship between the individual, the community, and the structural reality of just and unjust relations in the world. Students can expect a wide-ranging intellectual experience of past and future thinking concerning justice as well as a chance to develop their own projects in Transformative Justice.

**Peace Voice: What exactly is transformative justice?**

**Myler:** A difficult question. Maybe that things as they stand in the justice system, in the jails, in the political killing fields of the world, are just not working that well. There seems to be a growing recognition that we just can't go on with the old ways of retribution, punishment, trauma, and revenge. We need to find ways not to lose millions of people each year to the human trash heap of violence and hopelessness. Transformative Justice may look narrowly at a young teenager who has committed a crime against property, who is given a chance to repair his or her harms in the community instead of receiving a criminal record. It may look more broadly at structural injustices—against minorities, children, women, races, the list is long—which we need to approach through larger changes of human empathy, and of political and economic will. In this sense, Transformative Justice is about responsibility of offenders for their actions, and the needs of those who have been harmed. This relationship between victim and offender is recast from guilt and punishment to one of responsibility, restoration, transformation, healing—a repairing of harm on individual and social levels.

**Peace Voice: What do you hope students will get out of the course?**

**Myler:** I would hope that students would begin to view themselves as citizens—of their communities and of the world. They would begin to see their own political and social involvement “in the game”—as one post-modern thinker termed our world; they would begin to

reflect on their own ethical responsibilities, their own human place within the structures I referred to earlier, their own potential to enact positive social change, to take steps, even very small ones toward transformation of justice and peace. Perhaps this process would become most obvious in students' own sense of validation and empowerment toward making a positive social difference in their worlds. Something I think we all want to achieve, even if only subconsciously at times.

**Peace Voice: You spent a semester recently as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Restorative Justice at SFU. What influence did that have on you?**

**Myler:** Well . . . You know I did my undergraduate studies at SFU—more than a generation ago, now. Though I have taught at SFU off-and-on over the years, it really was an odd and very pleasurable feeling to return as a student for one last time—to be reminded of what students go through in their daily lives. My mentor at the Centre for Restorative Justice, and its director, was Brenda Morrison. She was very kind to me (took pity on a student in his 50s), included me in seminars and community events, and never pushed too hard. Really, if I have a grasp of what Transformative or Restorative Justice might be it is due to Brenda and to other people she brought to SFU such as Howard Zehr, who is now often referred to as the “father” of Restorative Justice and Kay Pranis who is a gifted senior practitioner of “circle” work within the Restorative Justice field. I was lucky to meet those people. I'll end with a brief definition of Restorative Justice given by Howard Zehr. It is, he says: “A vision of the good, of how we want to be together, based on human values that seem to have some universality.” Sounds alright to me.

*Recommended Book: Liz Elliott's **Security With Care**. Elliott's book is the best introduction I am aware of to issues surrounding the field of Restorative/ Transformative Justice. Elliott died last year—until that time she was co-director, with Brenda Morrison, of the Centre for Restorative Justice at SFU.*

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Above: Randy Janzen and Robin Higgins facilitate a Mediation Workshop with Nelson's Good Neighbour Program, April 2012

## Compassionate Communication - a cornerstone of peace and justice

Students in the Transformative Justice advanced certificate program will also enrol in a week-long workshop which focuses on mediation and communication skills. They will have the opportunity to further their practical experience with the Mir Centre for Peace's community mediation program.

## Mir Centre Lecture Series presents

### Justice Murray Sinclair: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Mir Centre for Peace at Selkirk College is pleased to host Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Justice Sinclair will speak at the Brilliant Cultural Centre in Castlegar about his role in educating all Canadians about what happened in Canada's Indian Residential Schools (IRS).

The Commission is also tasked with documenting the stories of survivors, families, communities and anyone personally affected by the IRS experience. "The relationship between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Canada has suffered as a result of the Indian Residential Schools", says Mir Centre for Peace Chair, Randy Janzen. "This event is important because healing that relationship will require education, awareness, and an increased understanding of the legacy still being felt today. Canada still has a long way to go as far as understanding what happened".



**Date:** Friday, September 21, 2012 ♦ 7 pm

**Location:** Brilliant Cultural Centre, Castlegar BC

**Fee:** Adults \$16 ♦ Students/Seniors \$13